

CLAIMS

1. A method of approximating hierarchy, the method comprising:
over a time period, for a set of communication addresses for members of a given
set, collecting data representative of each pairwise communication addressing between
5 said members of a given set; and

based on said data, forming a hierarchy construct of an approximate hierarchical
relationship of said members of a given set wherein said relationship is based upon
number of pairwise communications between each of said members of a given set.

2. The method as set forth in claim 1 further comprising:

10 based on said data, forming a communications construct illustrating a
communications among said members of a given set such that said construct indicates
at least a frequency of intercommunications between said members of a given set
wherein said frequency is indicative of hierarchical relationship of said members of a
given set.

15 3. The method as set forth in claim 2 comprising:

said communications construct indicates relative position of said members of a
given set with respect to a locus wherein the locus is indicative of the highest position of
the hierarchy of said members of a given set.

4. The method as set forth in claim 2 wherein said locus is a centermost position in

said communications construct.

5. The method as set forth in claim 2 wherein said communications construct indicates relative position of said members of a given set in said hierarchy by color coding nodes representative of said members of a given set with respect to levels of said hierarchy.

6. A method for approximating a hierarchical structure from electronic mail communications, the method comprising:

for a given set of communications network users, collecting addressing data from each electronic mail message sent during a predetermined time period;

from said addressing data, determining the frequency of electronic mail messages between each and every one of said users respectively; and

from said frequency of electronic mail messages, approximating the hierarchical structure of relationship of said users.

7. The method as set forth in claim 6, said determining further comprising:

providing an image illustrative of said frequency of electronic mail messages wherein said image is representative of both communications among said users and hierarchical relationship of said users.

8. A system for approximating a hierarchical relationship of members of a communications network, the system comprising:

means for collecting addressing data for each pairwise communication between each of the members of said network; and

means for analyzing said addressing data and for approximating the hierarchical relationship of members therefrom.

5 9. The system as set forth in claim 8 wherein said means for analyzing said addressing data and for approximating the hierarchical relationship therefrom further comprises:

means for constructing a graphical illustration of said communications network wherein said illustration has nodes representative of each of said members and nodal
10 connectors representative of a threshold of said pairwise communications between said nodes and frequency of said pairwise communications above said threshold.

10. The system as set forth in claim 9 wherein a locus of said graphical illustration is representative of topmost member of said communications network.

11. The system as set forth in claim 10 wherein said locus is a centermost node of
15 said graphical illustration.

12. A computer memory device comprising:

computer code for gathering data representative of addressing information inherent in pairwise communications between members of a set; and

computer code for generating from gathered said data a hierarchy of said

members based upon frequency of the pairwise communications between each pair of said members.

13. The device as set forth in claim 12 comprising:

computer means for generating a graphical illustration of said hierarchy.

5 14. The device as set forth in claim 12 comprising:

computer means for generating a graphical illustration of communications between said members wherein said illustration depicts both said hierarchy and at least frequency of communications between said members.

15. A method of doing business comprising:

10 for a given set of members of a communications network, receiving addressing data representative of each and every communication between any two said members over a predetermined time period;

analyzing said data for at least frequency of communications between each and every member of said set; and

15 from said analyzing, providing an approximated hierarchical relationship of said members.

16. The method as set forth in claim 15 wherein said analyzing further comprises:

forming an image of a communications network among said members.

17 The method as set forth in claim 16 wherein said forming an image further comprises graphically illustrating said hierarchical relationship.

18. The method as set forth in claim 16 wherein said forming an image further comprises graphically illustrating frequency of communications between said members.

5 19. A method for approximating an organizational hierarchy based on electronic mail communications between individuals, the method comprising:

forming a database from addressing information inherent in electronic mail messages between each and every one of said individuals over a predetermined time period;

10 using all said addressing information in said database, forming a graphical image of network communications wherein each node represents a given one of said individuals and nodal connectors between nodes represent a predetermined threshold number of electronic mail messages between nodes connected thereby and length of said nodal connectors is representative of number of electronic mail messages above said threshold wherein said nodes are color coded according to position within said image and said color coding is representative of position in an approximated organizational hierarchy for said individuals; and

15 using said image, generating an image of said approximated organizational hierarchy in a form of a standard organizational chart.